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## SERMON VII.

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BROOKLYN, N. Y.

### THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY.

"VERILY I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."—MATTHEW 26: 13.

GREAT love can impose great obligations. It is when justified by a deep and strong affection, that the right of one man to act for others, engaging and covenanting in their behalf—as a king for his subjects, or a patriarch for his descendants—is most freely recognized and scrupulously respected. The unwritten wish, the implied request, will often obtain a fulfillment which no decree of chancery could secure.

Saul, in his cruel zeal for the people of God, had violated the solemn treaty made in the days of Joshua with the inhabitants of

Gibeon. But when David sought to make atonement for the crime, by delivering up seven of Saul's posterity to be slain before the Lord, he remembered the promise he had made to Jonathan, that he would show kindness unto his house forever; and he spared the son of Jonathan, "because of the Lord's oath that was between them." (2 Sam. 21 : 7.)

The Jews had broken every covenant, and made void every vow, when Jeremiah the prophet found one family, the house of Rechab, who had obeyed the voice of Jonadab their father in all that he had charged them, "to drink no wine, nor to build houses, nor to plant vineyards, but to dwell in tents forever." (Jer. 35.)

It is a precious privilege to carry out the intention of a friend. Years after a parent's death, the son discovers in some neglected corner, a manuscript which makes known the unsuspected destination of property left without bequest. It needs no signature or seal to prove the familiar characters. Whatever sacrifice the duty may involve, he cheerfully assumes, rejoicing that somewhat still remains, whereby to honor a memory so dear.

In the Testament or Will of our Lord and Saviour, my brethren, there are some legacies yet unpaid, to be discharged by you and by me. It is true that in a sense he has left us little to accomplish. We are far less executors than inheritors of his grace; a treasure won with his own arm, and distributed with his own hand. But it must gratify us, here and there among these pages, to light upon some clause, some codicil, which it remains for us, in these latter days, and these ends of the earth, to execute; some wise and kindly purpose for us to carry out. Such a privilege is disclosed in the verse of the Gospel which I have read. Let it be our congenial task to fulfill this Scripture on this day. We have here a pledge to redeem, a promise to make good; and that for Jesus' sake. To a poor woman who had done him a valued service, our Friend and Master gave this assurance in our name: "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done, shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." (Mark 14 : 9.)

In order to the more convenient treatment of our subject, we shall discuss it under three heads:

The Deed, its Significance, and its Commemoration.

I. It was at Bethany, six days before the Passover, the last that Jesus ate with his disciples. He had been absent but a little while from the group of faithful friends who so often had entertained him in that village. But this was his first visit among them since that astonishing miracle, the resurrection of Lazarus. If he did not linger then, to rejoice with the sisters over the happy restoration of the brother they had mourned, too well they knew the reason. The good work performed in raising up their dead,

cost him the intensified hatred and persecution of his foes. From that day forth they took counsel together to put him to death. Having for a time concealed himself in a country near to the wilderness, Jesus was now returning to suffer at Jerusalem all things that had been foretold concerning him. Bethany, two miles from that city, was in his way. While there a guest in the house of Simon, a leper whom he probably had cured, perhaps a relative of the family whom he loved, there was prepared for him a supper, at which Martha served; and Lazarus sat with him at the table. And what a scene was that! Christ the first-fruits of the resurrection; and at his side, the earnest of his coming victory, one whom he had raised to show forth in advance his power! Angels were bending over to behold it; and even the obtuse and unbelieving Jews crowded around, "not for Jesus' sake only, but that they might see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead."

Then was this memorable deed performed. "A woman"—say two Evangelists, fearing, it may be, lest by the mention of her name, they should expose her to the malice of the priests, as she was doubtless alive when they wrote—"Mary," says the Evangelist John, who wrote long after, "took an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard, very precious, very costly, and she brake the box, and poured the ointment on his head, as he sat at meat, and anointed his feet, and wiped them with her hair; and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment."

We have no precise knowledge as to the material of which this fragrant balsam consisted. It was prepared in part at least of nard, a medicinal shrub brought from the far East. It appears to have been a liquid of very subtle and pervasive aroma; and in order to the preservation of its delicate perfume, was imported in flasks made of a sort of marble called alabaster. As well from its scarcity as from the distance and the difficulty of transportation, this unguent was most expensive. Judas Iscariot, whose opinion seems to have been shared by his fellow-disciples, at once calculated its worth in money, at three hundred pence, equivalent to the sum of forty-five or fifty dollars. This, unquestionably, in the moderate circumstances of the parties, was a great outlay, and could be justified only by the importance of the occasion, or the dignity of the person in whose honor the deed was performed. It is a trait of human nature, which we see illustrated every week among ourselves, to lavish upon the dead what is withheld or begrudged to the living. Grief loosens the grasp of avarice, and often impels the liberal to a profusion wasteful and ruinous. The Jews did not carry this practice to the extreme witnessed among the Egyptians, whose process of embalment, lasting from thirty to seventy days, demanded an expenditure ranging from three to five hundred dollars and even upward; but they used spices and other costly compounds, often with great prodigality. Thus it is

recorded of Asa: "They buried him in his own sepulchers, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odors and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him." (2 Chron. 16 : 14.)

And how did Mary happen to be possessed of this costly and precious ointment? It does not appear that she had purchased it recently, or with a view to this application; for our Lord speaks of her as having kept it against the present hour, implying a lapse of time since its procurement; and the disciples who murmured against her, said, It might have been sold for much, as though aware that it had been for some time on hand. Hence the plausible notion, that this may have been the remainder of the ointment which Mary and Martha had purchased for the funeral of Lazarus. That it was used on such occasions, we know. At the moment of our Lord's resurrection, this Mary, with other women, was on her way to his tomb, bearing sweet spices and ointment, bought and prepared, that they might anoint his body after its burial. Perhaps it was a similar design which the coming of Jesus and the raising of their brother to life had interrupted, and rendered unnecessary.

If this be a warrantable conjecture, it leads us to believe that the act, so appropriate, so beautiful, of anointing the body of her Master "aforehand, to the burying," was performed intelligently, by virtue of that prescience which a mighty affection sometimes seems to inspire, if not a distinct fore-knowledge of the event divinely imparted. The friends of Christ, indeed, could not be ignorant of his danger. The chief-priests and the Pharisees had published their intention to destroy him, giving commandment, "that if any man knew where he were, he should show it, that they might take him." Jesus himself had spoken plainly of the fate he was soon to meet; and all things presaged a speedy fulfillment of the prediction. It is not likely that he had concealed from the family at Bethany what he had long since disclosed with such particularity to the twelve: that "the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief-priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day." (Luke 9 : 22.) But the malice of men should not cheat his humble follower of the privilege of preparing that sacred body for the burial. Jesus was now going up to Jerusalem. The threatened vengeance might soon burst upon his head. Severed from those who loved him, it might be that no moistened eye should look on his dying pains, no gentle hand wipe his bleeding brow, no womanly care lay out his inanimate form. Let others provide for his present wants; she thinks of that extreme and bitter hour when all shall have forsaken, and the sufferer be left to cruelty and shame. And bringing forth the costly treasure, kept, it may



be, with some thought of her own decease and burial, she breaks the bottle, and pours out its fragrant contents upon his head, so soon to be crowned with thorns; upon his feet, so soon to be nailed to the tree; and she wipes them with her hair.

II. Observe, secondly, the SIGNIFICANCE of the deed. One only, of those present at this transaction, was competent fully to declare its import. If, as we have supposed, Mary herself, by an instinct of that holy love prompting her to the performance, apprehended somewhat of its meaning, it could have been but a dim and shadowy conception at most. The disciples, from their more elevated stand-point, ought to have been able to form a just as well as generous opinion of this good deed wrought upon their Master; but they were not. Possessed for the time by the bad spirit of parsimony which their apostate companion diffused, their eyes were holden, that they could not see the fitness and the timeliness, the grace and the sweetness and the glory of this loving, adoring prodigality. ONE saw it. But for his divine appreciation, the purest and most beautiful deed that ever woman wrought, had been forgotten out of mind, or had come down to us with the stain of a mean and sordid imputation.

With Christ for witness and interpreter, my brethren, we have little to fear from that most potent of all baneful influences, misconstruction. Ignorant or malignant, the comments of human censors, rectified by one sentence from his holy lips, lose all their noxious power. It can scarcely go harder with us than with her whom the very friends and followers of her Lord condemned with oracular prudence and virtuous indignation. Yet the simple monument of Mary's love, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious, rises at his command through the earth-born mists that strive to shut it in. And we may well believe, that one happy result of this lesson, to the disciples of our Lord themselves, was a vivid apprehension of their own privilege of appeal to him as an all-seeing and impartial Arbitrator of motive and action. For the moral grandeur they subsequently attained, as stewards of the mysteries of God, when in the words of one who was added to their company, they could say, "With us it is a very small thing that we should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, we judge not our own selves: but he that judgeth us is the Lord," (1 Cor. 4: 3, 4;) for the dignity of this position, they were perhaps indebted, in no slight degree, to the recollection riveted upon their minds by the saying of Jesus which we have taken for our text; the recollection of that woman, slandered by an apostate, censured by the Jews, rebuked by her kindred, misjudged by themselves; but looking through her streaming tears, confident of a generous appreciation, from

men who troubled, to Jesus who approved her: "Not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts."

Uncharitable judgments, my brethren, are not wholly precluded by our increase of light and liberality; and were it left us to make out the significance of this deed, perhaps we should go as wide of the mark as those who witnessed it first. But the monument bears its own record. Let us approach and read it there, traced by the same hand that raised the memorial, in lines most legible and plain.

(1.) It was a useful work. Such is the first inscription: "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me." The word thus translated means, primarily—fair, goodly, beautiful, as to external form and appearance. This it was, but the language implies more. "Many good works," said Jesus to the Jews, "have I showed you from my Father; for which of those works do ye stone me?" (John 10 : 32.) It was moral excellence that distinguished the miracles and teachings of the Saviour; and the quality pertaining to them he ascribes to this humble performance. More precisely, however, the epithet refers to the effect and influence of the work possessing this quality. This is the ordinary sense of the word, where it is used to characterize the practices of piety among the followers of Christ. "Charge them that be rich," writes the Apostle, "that they be rich in good works;" which he explains by adding: "Ready to distribute, willing to communicate." (1 Tim. 6 : 18.) "They which have believed in Christ," he says again, "must be careful to maintain good works. These things," he continues, "are good and profitable to men." (Titus 3 : 8.) Of the widows for whom provision was made by the churches, he ordains that they must be such as are "well-reported of for good works;" and these he specifies: "If she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints' feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work." (1 Tim. 5 : 10.) "Let ours also," he exhorts concerning the members of the apostolic congregations, "learn to maintain good works;" or, as the margin reads, "profess honest trades; that they be not unfruitful." (Titus 3 : 14.) From these illustrations we learn that the transaction before us belongs to the same class of useful and profitable deeds, with alms-giving, hospitality, the training up of orphans, the comforting of the distressed, the diligent pursuit of honorable and remunerative business. A truth in direct contradiction to the selfish utilitarianism of worldly sinners and worldly Christians alike.

(2.) Passing on to another side of this memorial pillar, we read its second inscription. It was a great work. Jesus said: "She hath done what she could." The deed was coëxtensive with her ability; the ability of a rational and immortal creature to honor,

extol, and glorify the Saviour who redeemed her with his most precious blood. To the eye which looked only upon the outward appearance, it seemed an act which nothing but its wasteful extravagance raised above insignificance; to the eye that searcheth hearts, it was grand, august, important. Simon has not done so much in making him a supper; Martha is not doing so much in serving; nor will Peter do more, when fastening his eyes upon the lame man lying at the gate which was called Beautiful, he shall say: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." (Acts 3 : 6.) The value of a deed wrought upon Christ or for the sake of Christ, though relative to us, is absolute to him. If it be our best, though it were another's least, it is great and precious when its perfume ascends to heaven. He asks for our hearts, our whole hearts; and if as the outward sign and seal of that inward consecration, we can give him but two farthings, or a cup of cold water, it is as though we had given him, with that same sanctifying gift, all the kingdoms of the world, and their glory and power.

(3.) There is a third inscription upon the monument. It informs us that this memorable deed was an act of faith in a crucified Saviour. Jesus said: "Let her alone; against the day of my burying hath she kept this." Some would have it, that reference is here made, not to the intention of the woman, but rather to the overruling purpose of Providence: as though the Saviour had said: "She hath done it in effect, though unconsciously, to prepare my body for the tomb." But the extraordinary commendation bestowed upon her in our text, was scarcely such as Christ would pronounce upon a blind instrument for the fulfillment of the Divine will. There were others who unwittingly subserved that will, by procuring the Saviour's death; as Judas, of whom he said: "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." (Matt. 26 : 24.) Another such instrument was Caiaphas, who "spake not of himself, but, being high-priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation." (John 11 : 51.) The woman concerned in this transaction, however, was qualified for a far more intelligent part. Who was she? It was that Mary, say some, who washed his feet with her tears, as he sat at meat in a Pharisee's house, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head. (Luke 7.) It was that Mary, as all are agreed, who once sat at Jesus' feet in her own home at Bethany, and heard his word, and chose that good part which was never to be taken from her. (Luke 10.) Of all the followers and friends of Jesus, we read of only one, who pondered and treasured the sayings concerning him with equal intentness; and she was that other Mary, the blessed mother

of our Lord. (Luke 2 : 19, 51.) With no more than the faith of her father Abraham, who longed to see his day, and saw it, and was glad, (John 8 : 56,) she had been competent to this service. But hers was the fuller apprehension reserved for Gospel times; faith nourished not like his by prophecy, nor like ours by history, but by living communication with him who was its author and object. Even the less spiritual Martha had confessed her belief in him as the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world. To Mary he was more than Messiah, the Anointed; more than Master, Teacher, Healer; yea, more than the Resurrection and the Life. By the clear illumination of that faith, which is always and in every case the gift of God, enabling us to discover and embrace the Redeemer in all his offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King, she now beheld him also as the suffering Messiah, the atoning Lamb to be slain for the expiation of sins; and she anointed him to the sacrifice of his body upon the cross.

III. Such was the deed, and such, at least in part, its significance. Look now at its COMMEMORATION. "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

For the most delicate service that mortal rendered him on earth, our gracious Redeemer provides the most delicate reward. That it was unsought, we know; that it was unforeseen, we may be sure. The promises and blessings pronounced by Jesus were not such as to gratify the ambitious desires of men; though he that refused the petition of the mother of Zebedee's children for worldly preferment, when his disciples asked a recompense for their toils and sacrifices, assured them of an hundred-fold return "now in this time," as well as in the world to come life everlasting. But of all such desires, that for celebrity or fame is perhaps the most refined and the most insidious. We do not learn that our Saviour made to the Twelve any promise of such distinction. It was for two lowly, loving, unambitious women, that this honor was reserved: for the one, that all generations should call her blessed, (Luke 1 : 48;) for the other, that whosoever the Gospel should be preached in the whole world, approving mention should be made of her good deed.

Upon the immediate disciples of our Lord the accomplishment of this declaration first devolved. Hence Matthew, John, and Peter, (at whose dictation it is supposed that Mark wrote his Gospel,) the three who were present at the scene, all record it; the more fully perhaps, and the more ingenuously, too, because their own uncharitable temper furnished occasion for the reproof it implied. John indeed gives a pleasing instance of his own care to fulfill the command; for happening elsewhere to mention the name of Mary, he adds, with beautiful particularity: "It was that

Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair." (John 11 : 2.) And often, we may suppose, was the touching story of this woman's faith and devotion told by those living witnesses of the event, who preached this gospel to the multitudes of many lands. Once, however, inscribed on this imperishable page, "like words graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever," (Job 19 : 24,) they constitute "a memorial that shall never be forgotten," (Ecclus. 35 : 7.) "None of all the trumpets of fame," one has well said, "sound so loud and so long as the everlasting Gospel." It has been true of the Church of God, as of the dwelling of Simon, that the whole "house has been filled with the odor of that ointment."

And what, my brethren, is the share in this commemoration that falls to us at this late day? What, after so many centuries, shall we do, worthily and honorably, to carry out our Master's purpose here made known? We shall not, like some, exalt the saint to an equality with her Saviour. We shall not build a temple, nor carve an image, nor set apart a day, for idolatrous worship of the creature. That were disparaging to Christ, unprofitable to us, and repugnant to her. Two things are feasible: the one, which we have been endeavoring, by the story of her pious deed read and related from the Gospel page, to keep in fresh remembrance one who was in Christ before us, and who ministered, as it were in our name and behalf, to his comfort. The other, which we shall now attempt, to appropriate this memorial to that one use and service which were all her desire, "the praise of his glory" for whom her deed was wrought.

1. Behold, then, dear friends, how exceedingly precious to Christ is the love of his people! Affection is often squandered on objects most unworthy: the wisest and the best fail sometimes to apprehend the value of sacrifices made for them, and tenderness lavished upon them; but when Jesus becomes the center of our regard, there is no waste of the perfume: there is no depreciation of the gift. Ah! be not afraid then to give him too much! Give him all—the whole heart—keep nothing back. "Jesus is worthy to receive," not thrones and crowns and scepters only, but what he prizes more—incomparably more—the heart, the casket of an offering more sweet to him than aught in the universe beside. Pour out the fullness of your affection upon him who has loved you with an everlasting love, and stooped to the cross that he might win yours. Has he removed some object of your fondness? Have you, like Mary, been called to part for a season with some cherished human friend? Has one or another channel of your affection been cut off? Then let the full tide flow out toward him who was dead, and behold, he liveth for evermore. Give him, your Lord and Master, what you had thought to bury with a



creature: the precious ointment of your kindness and service and zeal!

2. See, too, how precious to Christ is the memory of his people! A signal proof we have in the declaration of our text. For I suppose the design with which it was made to have been rather the illustration of his regard for the memory of all his saints than the elevation of one to a peculiar privilege. To be remembered, my friends; to be honorably remembered; to be lovingly and kindly and gratefully remembered; to be thought of and mentioned, sometimes, often, long after the pulse shall cease to throb, and the brow to ache; to live in the remembrance of the pure and the wise and the just and the holy: ah! what a reward is that! But most of all, to have, in the thoughts of Jesus, a place from which not all the concerns of his eternal kingdom can crowd us; a name "graven on the palms of his hands," (Is. 49 : 16;) a name "set as a seal upon his heart!" (Sol. 8 : 6.) "This honor have all his saints." (Ps. 149 : 9.)

3. Observe, again, how great the jealousy of Christ for the good fame of his people! Lightly, thoughtlessly drops the word of censure, of suspicion, upon the action or the character; sportively are cast the fire-brands, arrows and death of slander; and men hear not the voice that saith: "Let her alone; why trouble ye her?" "He that toucheth these, toucheth the apple of mine eye!" (Zech. 2 : 8.) But in that day when he maketh up his jewels, while he vindicates the justice and wisdom of his own law and dealings, surely, the Lord will look upon his people to take away their reproach. "Them that honor me I will honor, saith the Lord; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." (1 Sam. 3 : 30.)

4. Mark also how generously Christ estimates the offerings and services of his people! Mary was not so lavish of her ointment, as Jesus of his praise. Not his the moderation that withholdeth more than is meet, in its dread of excess. Plenteous in mercy, full of compassion, is the Master we serve. Good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, is the reward he gives. Be very sure that whatever others may do, he will put the best construction upon a work of faith and love wrought for his sake.

5. Once more, Learn how Christ would have us cherish the memory of his people. Records of good men's lives, are among the means which God hath most emphatically approved and blessed, for the sanctification of believers. Some have chosen or affected to despise these means. It has been said, in the very spirit of that captious criticism which our Lord here condemns, that religious biographies are but a species of romance, as unprofitable and as little to be trusted. The word of God and the experience of Christians alike disprove the unworthy statement. Much of the canon of Scripture is made up of religious biography: and

outside of this canon there is no class of writings that have ministered more effectually to the comfort and growth of disciples in all ages, than this of which we speak. Jesus "will be glorified in his saints, and be admired in all them that believe; because their testimony among us is believed." (2 Thess. 1 : 10.) Would that the example of his faithful servants might be more frequently "spoken of for a memorial," wheresoever the Gospel is preached! Would that the edifying memoirs of so many pious men, and "also of honorable women not a few," with which, thank God! our literature at the present day abounds, might supplant to a great extent the newspaper, the magazine, the novel. Then might we become, more practically and habitually, "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." (Heb. 6 : 12.)

And now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us: unto him be glory in the Church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!

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## SERMON VIII.

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### THE DIVINE INCARNATION.

"WHO, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."—PHIL. 2 : 6-8.

THIS passage asserts the doctrine, or rather the fact of the Divine Incarnation in the person and earthly life of the historic Jesus, blending therewith a series of incidents to be found in the Scripture record of that life. The antecedent of the relative pronoun "who," is this very Jesus, in language that admits of no just doubt as to its meaning, affirmed to be divine, and with equal clearness affirmed to be human. These two facts—the divine fact and the human fact—being thus combined in one mysterious person, we designate as a divine incarnation, involving the wonderful

doctrine of God in Christ. Christ is hence a Theophany in the strictest sense—a personal manifestation of the invisible God to the children of men.

This doctrine is neither obscurely hinted in the Scriptures, nor left to rest upon the authority of a single passage: It is so often and so variously announced, that we must believe it, or reject the Bible as the supreme and infallible rule of faith. John says, that "in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made." The Word is here spoken of as a divine person, to whom the act of creation is attributed. Identifying this Word still farther, the evangelist adds: "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." This language obviously refers to Jesus Christ; and if we credit its testimony, we certainly can not put Christ into the same category with Paul or Socrates, or any merely human classification of persons. Christ is infinitely more than a man. He is God manifest in the flesh. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." In him "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." "For it hath pleased the Father, that in him should all fullness dwell." He "is the image of the invisible God." No such statements are ever made in regard to the works of nature; and nothing of the kind is ever affirmed of any other man. The fact of a divine incarnation in the man Christ Jesus, though as to its mode, the greatest of mysteries, is nevertheless clearly presented in the Bible. The Bible is fully committed to the fact.

As to the design of God in this most extraordinary development of providence, we are not left wholly in the dark. In the first chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul presents and affirms the divinity of Christ; and in the second, he considers his humanity. Commenting upon the latter aspect as qualified and enriched by the former, the Apostle says, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same," appearing in the nature of the beings he came to save. He says again: "Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren; that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." Not to startle us with a magnificent wonder, or perplex thought with a mysterious problem—not to create the world, but to redeem and save it, did Christ put on the robes of our humanity, and become participant in the attributes, conditions, and experience of our common nature. For this object, he that was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, took upon him the

form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. For this object the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We surely can have no controversy with the end to be accomplished. It contemplates our good for eternity.

Assuming then both the fact and the Scripture theory of the divine incarnation in the person of Christ, I propose, on the present occasion, to turn your thoughts to the question of its relevancy to the intellectual, moral, and spiritual wants of man. You may take this thought in four particulars.

I. The Incarnation meets the eye of humanity with an appreciable HISTORIC PERSON. It so brings the divine Saviour of the world within the reach of human thought, within the circle of our experience and somewhat familiar knowledge, that the mind can act towards him and think of him, making him an object of conception in the understanding, and of affection in the heart. This it does by supplying the radical condition of an historic person, near enough to be seen and appreciated, described and remembered in all ages.

Were the term Christ a mere word invested with a sort of diffusive and mystic enchantment—the symbol of some strange and floating ambiguity—the indefinite sign of a vague, incomprehensible and ethereal awfulness, with no facts to measure its meaning, and no history to distinguish a person; were this the state of the case relatively to our perceptions, then Christ would be an unapproachable abstraction, unavailable for the purposes of thought and hope, like the God of the pantheist—any thing, every thing, nothing. The term would have no meaning which humanity could apprehend or appreciate; the whole question of man's salvation would sink into the deepest darkness of intellectual confusion; the sky of thought would be perfectly starless; and thought itself become a wretched fugitive, without a stopping-place or an object, and scarcely a path. Enveloped in such a mysticism, the intellect could see nothing to fix the form of its action, or invite the confiding and genial sympathies of the heart. Not knowing what to think, we should equally not know how to feel. We should be absolutely lost in the clouds of mystery. A system of salvation so impalpable and indeterminate in its agency, would not be suited to the wants of the soul. It would be a perplexity rather than a comfort, to even the most refined scholarship. It certainly could not bring forth the responses of human nature in intelligible acts of acceptance and hope.

Such, I am happy to say, is not the Being whom we are taught to regard as our Saviour. Christ is a person, as much so as Cæsar or Alexander—not a force, not a law, not an idea, not an abstraction, but a living, concrete person, marked by his own peculiar history, qualities, and character. As to his humanity, he had

a birth, an infancy, a youth, a manhood, and a death-scene. He once trod our globe, spake our words, possessed our nature, was seen by human eyes, and listened to by human ears. His earthly life, in the facts which compose it, in the utterances of wisdom by which it is distinguished, in the numerous miracles which he wrought, in the sufferings he endured, in the sinless purities that form his celestial mantle, may, like any other life, be placed on the records of history, and thus go forth to greet the intelligence of the world. Jesus came to earth in the substantial verity of a person; on earth he lived; on earth he died; and hence the term Christ, with all its related facts, grouped, combined, and made central in one person, conveys a meaning which would be utterly lost, yea, impossible, if this Jesus had not appeared in the flesh. Whether seeing him, or reading the history of his life, we have something to think of, being able mentally to grasp, and at least partially to measure the object. The person to whom we are to look, and on whom to depend, is brought to the level of our apprehensive capacity. The mind can work towards him, and state facts in regard to him. Approaching us in our own nature, and entering into the earthly conditions of that nature, he comes in a form so familiar, that the light which proceeds from him, is gathered to a focus at the point of our clearest thinking.

This, I am persuaded, is the best mode in which a Redeemer can salute the intellect or heart of this lost world. Let that Redeemer be a person so constituted as to be an object which the eye can see and faith appreciate. Let him come to the very world he means to bless. Let him be related by some bonds of affinity to the beings who are to be saved by his mission. Touched by the inspiration of his wonderful life, let history tell a reading race what this Redeemer did and said in the days of his flesh, and thus lay a foundation for his supremacy over thought and feeling in all time, and among all classes. These demands of our nature, these needful adaptations to our condition and wants, are abundantly supplied in the doctrine of the Word made flesh, and dwelling among us, thus giving us the opportunity to see this Word full of grace and truth. I can not explain the intrinsic mystery of the Incarnation; yet when I look at man, and reason from him, I see its pertinency to his present state as a pilgrim of earth.

II. The incarnation seems equally pertinent as a medium for God's APPROACH and MANIFESTATION of himself to our race. Religion has its basis not only in man as the recipient of truth and the active subject of exercises, but also in God as the great and glorious Being on whom the eye of thought is to be fastened, and by whom the affections of the heart are to be determined. God and man are fitted to each other; and yet before religion as an



experimental condition can be a fact in the bosom of the latter, there must be some communication, some expression of attributes and character from the former. God must come to man in some way sufficiently clear and effective to excite the spiritual elements of his nature; and to meet this primary necessity is one of the grand objects to be gained by the Divine Incarnation. Let me ask your careful attention while I attempt to simplify and explain this thought.

Jesus Christ, according to the Scriptures, is not the absolute Deity, or the absolute humanity, but the two in mysterious conjunction, without any confusion of nature or attributes—the one acting as the medium and visible vehicle of the other. He is chargeable with the most astounding assumptions ever made if this be not true, and equally chargeable the apostles with great self-deception, or a deliberate intention to mislead the world. The doctrine of God in Christ is so woven into the very web of the history and ministry of Christ, and then so published by his apostles, that if we reject it as false, the whole system of Christianity, considered as having a divine sanction, falls to the ground.

Observe, too, that this doctrine, as presented in the Bible, is not a gorgeous and dramatic wonder merely to excite human curiosity. It is not a supernatural comet sweeping through our intellectual heavens for no apparent object. Though as an idea it strains the eye of thought to its very utmost, still when apprehended and accepted, it becomes the happiest, clearest, and most privileged medium of vision. It is indeed the Mount of Vision. God himself is a Spirit, invisible, dwelling in light which no man can approach unto, inaccessible by sense, and incomprehensible by reason. In respect to this infinite Spirit, we are expressly told that Jesus Christ, the Immanuel, the God-Man, is "the image of the invisible God," "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." He is such as a medium in relation to the vision of humanity. Hence the Apostle says, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"—language clearly implying that the invisible Jehovah is manifested to our appreciating apprehension in the person of Christ. Christ is therefore a revealer of God to the soul, standing, as it were, at a point midway between the finite and the Infinite. The same idea fell from the lips of Jesus when in answer to Philip's request, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," he responded: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen ME, hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?" Christ here speaks as if he himself were the veritable manifestation of God, gently rebuking Philip for not knowing it. "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," is an utterance that transcends humanity—the

sublimest ever heard if true, and the most awful if false. By the showing of his own words, Jesus was not simply a man, but rather God manifest *to* man in the flesh. Let any merely human being, a Socrates or a Plato, a Mohammed or a Paul, undertake to put himself on this level, and thus speak of himself; and he could not sustain such a position for an instant under the scrutinizing search of human thought. Yet Jesus did take this very position, and he has sustained it for ages; fixing it as a fact in the faith of countless millions of our race. The whole system of Bible religion has been molded into this form.

Here then we make a pause upon a question that comes up from the very depths of our own nature. Looking at Christ as the Immanuel, so to speak, as the Divine Man, we ask whether it is possible, so far as we can see, for the Immortal, Infinite, and Absolute Jehovah to approach our race in any other way so well suited to our condition, and so conducive to our instruction? There is a broad gulf between man and his Maker. How, through what medium, sign, or symbol, is this gulf to be crossed? How is God to come sufficiently near to the creature, to be an object of his intelligent apprehension, confidence, and love—yea, to recover him from his darkened as well as fallen state? How shall God himself move towards man? This is the question.

The light of nature I have no desire to disparage; yet nature is not a person. Nature has no intelligence and no heart—utters no voice—says nothing—makes no communication—especially professes no hope to guilty beings. Nature is merely a ponderous mechanism of worlds; silent as a vacant eternity; teaching only what reason infers—to a brute, nothing as a symbol of God, and to man, nothing except as he expounds it and gives it a meaning. Nature is not a conscious and living teacher, but rather a stimulus and suggestion to thought. Looking at the works of nature, its moving worlds, its majestic laws, its stupendous forces, its complicated and wonderful adaptations, its numerous appearances of intelligent authorship, government, and providence, reason sees the foot-prints of the Creator's power, wisdom, and glory; and yet the God of mere reason sits behind this august scene—himself unapproached, unapproachable, retired, reserved, distant, vast, unsocial, incomprehensible, mysterious, silent, separated from the creature by an infinite gulf. The space between the finite and the Infinite is so absolutely immense, the latter is so far removed from the former, that reason while compelling us to believe in the reality of God, and perhaps constructing a sort of tabular statement of his attributes, has always felt, and if left to her own light, always must feel, the embarrassment and perplexity of her own weakness. Moreover, the light of reason acting upon the works of nature, has utterly failed to meet the wants of humanity, and bring the race into a true spiritual intercourse with God. Its history on earth is

that of a palpable failure. Mere reason can not so enter into the inner sanctuary of the Divine Mind as to bring forth a science of God suited to the exigencies of fallen man. Here reason leaves a chapter to be written by some other hand. The most enlightened pagans have felt the extreme difficulty of the problem. Plato felt it, and expressed the hope that the Infinite One would condescend in some extraordinary way to confer with his earthly creatures. We hence conclude that something more than mere nature is wanted—something supernatural, above nature, oracular, proceeding from God by a special providence. And this, too, is the very thing for which our fallen and thinking race has sighed in every age, driven thither as by the force of an original instinct.

How shall this want be so met as to develop in the human bosom the elements and affections of a devotional and hopeful existence? This plainly can not be done by some silent and incommunicative wonder, however august and startling. Such a miracle might fill the world with awe, but it would give no light. It would not relieve the difficulties that surround and perplex our thoughts. It would not open a channel of access to God.

What say you then to the idea of a supernatural messenger in the form of a prophet, inspired and speaking by the authority of God, as a Moses, a David, an Isaiah, or a Paul? This would present to us a human being elevated by the special gift of God to the rank of an inspired teacher: we could see his person, mark the signs of his commission, hear his voice, and accept his words as having the divine seal; and this, supposing it to be real, would certainly be an advance upon the light of nature. Such a teacher of God would be vastly superior to the mere philosopher moving in the circle of his own wisdom. Let an angel perform this service, coming into the sphere of flesh and blood, a visitant to earth though not of earth; and this angelic incarnation, supposing it to be real, would rise far above the brightest illumination of mere reason. Such a messenger duly certified, would be better than Plato in the purest strain of thought that Plato ever had. The words of this messenger would be clearer than the light of ten thousand suns. Raise the supernatural to a still higher grade, as is done in the person of Christ; in him behold Divinity actually making a tabernacle in the flesh, connected with a human form, and there fixing a local habitation; accept the idea, not as a dry dogma to be written on parchment and occasionally pronounced, but as a living thought of your inmost mental life; dwell upon it and be the Christian here; passing by the philosophic marvel, enter into communion with the spiritual, absolute, and unseen Jehovah through this human medium; learn with the believing Thomas to say, "My Lord and my God;" hear Jesus, and listen to the Deity; see him, and observe divine affection streaming through him; irradiate the entire firmament of your being with

the transcendent brightness of this one idea; do this work effectually by a process of sublime contemplation and trustful faith; and let me tell you that the feebler lights of nature will be lost in the splendors of a Christian day. On the supposition that the Divine Incarnation is a reality, it is the most intimate, endearing, impressive, and transporting approach of the great God to the children of men. The Bible says that it is a reality; so Christ said; so the apostles said; so the faith of Christendom has affirmed; and surely such a reality combines in itself the utmost that we can think, and all that we can desire, in a proposed medium of intercourse between the Creator-God and the creature-man. Compared with such a fact, nature is but a taper. The collected wisdom of all the philosophers of earth is merely the prattle of infants. One sentence from the lips of such a Teacher, touching the point to which it refers, is better than a thousand pages of the most elaborate induction. The lovely simplicities of the perfect Human furnish a tabernacle for the majestic presence of the King of kings and the Lord of hosts. A mystery of grace salutes our thoughts, which as a mystery is forgotten in the glorious appropriateness of the thing. God never came so near to man as he has done in the person of Christ. The divinity of this Christ makes a climax in the supernatural system of the Scriptures. Let angels sing; let prophets tune their lyres; let miracles of power attend this wonderful Messenger of the covenant; let the zeal of cherubim and seraphim touch apostolic lips; and let the gratitude, delight, confidence, and devout surprise of lost millions bring their willing offerings to the altar of the Divine and the Human, as reared upon these mortal shores in the person of Jesus. He is indeed "the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Such a Being is at once God's best medium, and man's greatest facility. We want no more.

"Joy to the world—the Lord is come:  
Let earth receive her King;  
Let every heart prepare him room,  
And heaven and nature sing."

What are the feelings of God towards man? What does he propose to do for man? What does he require of man? These questions are so answered by the God-incarnate as to make duty plain, devotion natural, and hope reliable. The science of God is relieved of its ambiguity, and so brought to the level of humanity that the humblest child of Adam may learn the way to heaven. Rooted and grounded in the words of Jesus, we have that eternal life which consists in the true and saving knowledge of God, without the uncertainties of human logic, or the calculations of reason to determine the greater probability. Faith in him is reason resting on the bosom of the Deity. Hope through him is thought anchored to the Throne. Worship paid to him is homage divine.

III. The Divine Incarnation supplies the conditions of an impressive and powerful EXAMPLE. The example of Christ, to which the Bible so often appeals, was a development of character in the sphere of flesh and blood—a moral pattern, not manufactured in heaven and sent to earth, but originated and drawn amid the actualities of a human life, and that too by one who shared in the conditions and relations of that life. It comes to us in a human form, invested with circumstances that are not only human, but in themselves ill adapted either to suggest or produce such a character as that of Christ.

This example is positive and real, laid in facts, adjusted to conditions and relations, and intelligible to thought. It is not a fiction, or a poem, or a beautiful flower gathered in some unearthly clime. It is not a conception, but a fact. Jesus actually lived among men, speaking, acting, suffering, dying, as reported in the Gospel-narrative. The record of his life is a history of facts. One instinctively feels that the life of Christ is and must be real, though in its moral elements the most fragrant and eloquent ever seen among men. No merely human brain ever did, or could invent such a life. Jesus himself worked it upon this earthly soil, made the exhibition, wove its facts together, and thus gave an opportunity for its submission to the inspection of the world.

Earth, too, has ever wanted, though in not one of her own children has she ever furnished, a model character, complete, well-sustained, and sinless in all its parts. Not one of her heroes, poets, philosophers, or statesmen, not even the very best of her most select and favored pupils, can be referred to as a finished and perfect specimen of moral goodness. Those who seem to have shared most largely in the spirit and temper of heaven—the great benefactors, instructors and guides of mankind—all bear an unvarying testimony to a distinct sense of their own imperfection. Humiliating confessions are on their lips, and severe self-reproaches often felt in their hearts. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If we except Jesus, you can find no where in the whole history of the world an example of a perfectly sinless man. Hence, among men, repentance for sin is always a radical element in the inception and growth of a religious character. We must begin here; we can begin no where else, when seeking the communion and friendship of God. Not a sinner was ever converted, or a saint ever lived, free from the compunctions of conscious guilt.

Turning, then, to the wonderful Man of Galilee, we meet a character that at once strikes us as being sinless, absolutely perfect in all its expressions. This is our first impression; and moreover, the impression deepens just in proportion as we make ourselves familiar with the actual history of Jesus on earth. In him we do not detect the slightest evidence, that he ever had any experience



in the moral pangs of a sinner. He never acknowledged sin; he never made a confession; he never expressed a regret; he never recalled a word; he never said any thing to betray the least sense of moral imperfection; he never implied that he could in any respect have done better than he had done; though frequent in his communion with the Father, he never asked to be forgiven; he challenged the Jews to convict him of sin; in the habitual tenor of his own exercises, he always seemed to be reposing in the calm and quiet sense of his own perfection; and yet in all this we discover none of those incongruities and faults, which are so sure to contradict the pretension, when mere men claim to be without sin. In the Saviour the claim appears natural, spontaneous, unstudied, unsought, coming out as the intuitive language of his own spirit, without extravagance, without any effort at self-righteous display, and always harmonious with the most perfect simplicity and humility of character.

The principles which Christ taught, presenting them as the beliefs of his own mind, and wishing others to adopt them and be governed by them, are clothed with a wisdom and purity sufficient to make his words immortal. Those lips that spake such words, that taught so wisely, that were never moved except in the utterance of some holy feeling or some pure and heavenly truth, were under the direction not merely of a sagacious vision, but also of a perfect heart. The words of Christ were the deep soul-breathings of his inner life. His public ministry presents such a combination of qualities, such an originality and independence of idea, such a superiority to all the contrivances and methods of human art, such a perfect symmetry and balance of character, such an exemption from all the extravagances and infirmities of man, such a simplicity and beauty of moral expression, such an appropriateness to the occasion, such a tender sympathy with the wants of this sinning and suffering race, such an unselfish and benevolent attitude of mind—in a word, so many characteristics of personal excellence, appearing alike in the manner and matter of what he taught, that one spontaneously feels that here is a being, as pure as he is wise, sounding the deepest depths of spiritual truth while filling thought with the fragrance of perfect holiness. Christ's teachings perfectly obeyed, would make the world as sinless as heaven. They contain no signs of weakness, and none of impurity. There they stand, unrepealed and unequaled, a legacy of wisdom and holiness for the guidance of the race.

The actions of the Saviour, with equal emphasis, declare him to be a perfect model. We behold him "mingling with all sorts of persons, and with all kinds of events; we follow the steps of his public life, and we watch his most unsuspecting and retired moments; we see him in the midst of thousands, or with his disciples, or with a single individual; we see him in the capital of his

country, or in one of its remote villages, in the temple and the synagogue, or in the desert, or in the streets; we see him with the rich and with the poor, the prosperous and the afflicted, the good and the bad, with his private friends and with his enemies and murderers; and we behold him at last in circumstances the most overwhelming which it is possible to conceive, deserted, betrayed, falsely accused, unrighteously condemned, nailed to a cross. But wherever he is, and however placed, in the ordinary circumstances of his daily life, or at the last supper, or in Gethsemane, or in the judgment-hall, or on the hill of Calvary, he is the same meek, pure, wise, god-like Being." On all occasions, at all times, in all places, towards all persons, Jesus perfectly sustains the symmetrical and blameless beauty of himself—never uttering the language of passion—never doing any thing but the very thing he should do—dignified, yet not cold and reserved—intellectually great while accessible to the humblest child of want—exempt from every taint and foible of superstition—liberal without laxity—innocent as a lamb without weakness—uniting the sweetest passivities of patience and forbearance with the greatest force and energy of character—having nothing artificial or assumed, or planned for momentary effect—self-collected and self-possessed—alike superior to the infirmity of friends and the rage of enemies—proposing the immortal good of the race as the object of his mission—in all respects, coming up to the highest idea which can be formed of a perfect moral being, and hence admitting of no improvement in either the elements of his character, or the method of their combination. In him nothing was excessive and nothing defective. Judas betrays him, and yet no vengeance burns in the Saviour's heart. He is reviled, but he reviles not again. The contradiction of sinners he endures in silence. The terrible scenes of his trial and crucifixion fail to dispossess this wondrous, marvelous Jesus of the patience, love, and heavenly beauty, which have been the charm of his whole life. Indeed, every where we see in Christ a character unparalleled in the records of history, so gently simple that a child may converse with it, yet so morally grand as to fill speculation with admiration and wonder. Jesus was a perfect Man, gilding the firmament of our nature with the glories of heaven, as natural in his purity as he was sublime in his wisdom.

Eighteen centuries have elapsed since this Jesus moved as a man amid the scenes of earth. The short and simple annals of his life have borne his name to almost every clime, and invoked the judgment of countless millions. His character in even its minutest expressions has been thoroughly scanned by millions upon millions of men; and yet where, in all this vast array of mind, will you find a single person who, having made himself acquainted with the Bible history of Christ, ever supposed that he had detected a fault in the life of this most wonderful Being? What disciple

ever felt the necessity of making an apology for the conduct of his Lord? Those who neglect the Gospel, and even those who profess to be infidels, uniformly concede the perfection of the character assigned to Jesus. Thomas Paine, in his *Age of Reason*, is constrained to say: "Nothing that is here said, can apply even with the most distant disrespect to the real character of Jesus. He was a virtuous and amiable man." Rousseau, the polished though skeptical Frenchman, exclaims: "What sweetness! what purity in his manners! what impressive kindness in his instructions! what elevation in his maxims! what presence of mind! what skill and propriety in his answers! what control over his passions!" "Is it possible that a book in its faith so sublime, so wise, should be the work of men? Is it possible that he of whom it is a history, should himself be a man?" "Truly, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God." Rousseau felt the moral majesty of Christ's character. Napoleon Bonaparte felt the same majesty. "Every thing in him," says Napoleon in a conversation with the skeptical Bertrand, "astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me." "He is truly a being by himself." "The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine, every thing remains grand of a grandeur which overpowers." "From the first to the last he is the same—always the same—majestic and simple, infinitely firm and infinitely gentle." "I search in vain in history to find the similar to Jesus Christ, or any thing which can approach the Gospel." "Who but God could produce that type—that ideal of perfection, equally exclusive and original?" Not a man ever lived who, upon a candid inspection of the Gospel narrative, would not pronounce Christ the "Holy One and the Just." His moral life is the voice of heaven, full-toned, blending all the harmonies of virtue, and swelling out into the finished melody of celestial song. It alike transcends eulogy and entrances spiritual discernment. In its presence infidelity is ashamed of its sneer. The moral life of Jesus is a doctrine in action, "beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God." No advance in ethical science sees in it any thing to correct or improve. It is a wonder, a mystery, a miracle, a celestial advent, in the kingdom of flesh and blood.

Looking now at the divine qualities and prerogatives of this mysterious Person, we of course accept his example as a final and absolute authority—a divine force or law, free from the fallibilities of human nature, and hence differing from the example of a prophet or an apostle. The example of Christ is an actual expression of moral truth, coming before us freighted with the sanctions of the Being who furnished it. In it we hear the voice of God, and learn his will. No command could be more positive, and no words clearer. The spirit and temper of Christ being ascertained,

the duty of man is made known. His life is a revelation from the throne of God.

Descending from the divine to the human aspect of the same person, we then observe his example in that circle of relations and circumstances, which are common to him and ourselves—in the virtues possible to man—in those trials, tribulations, and troubles of earth, by which he shared in the lot of men, teaching the world by his own action how to feel and what to do. Following in the line of the history, we see him in prayer; we see him in all points tempted like as we are; we see him as the man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; we see him when the stormy clouds of persecution gather over him; we see him among friends and among foes; we see him without a place where to lay his head, poorer than the birds of the air; we see him when honored and when dishonored; we see him bathed in the bloody sweat of Gethsemane, and expiring on the cross of Calvary; we see him in the whole range of the active, and also the passive virtues; we see him in all the walks and incidents of an earthly pilgrimage, severer than which no man ever felt; and wherever we see him, and under whatever circumstances, a pure and heavenly beauty shines upon him, and from him. Thus Jesus, the man, the sinless and perfect man, appears.

Combining, now, the two aspects in one vision—the divine and the human—we may well say with the poet:

"Majestic sweetness sits enthroned  
Upon the Saviour's brow."

What a delicate penciling of thought! A sweetness that is majestic! A majesty that is sweet! The life of such a being constitutes a presence and a power on earth, the like of which no man ever saw or felt before. As an example, it is perfect in its qualities, divine in its sanction, and human in its form. It exhibits our nature in its primitive beauty, in its unforfeited intimacy with Heaven, in its likeness to the immaculate Godhead, in its restored perfection, unsoiled by sin, glowing with a celestial consciousness, wearing the robes of innocence, and emitting the odors of Paradise. Such a life is in itself a most wonderful fact, and not less wonderful, as a power to instruct and impress the children of men. It blends the divine and the human in the greatest of mysteries and the sweetest of truths. The Divine Incarnation is hence a pertinency to the condition of man, which we can never cease to admire. The doctrine commends itself to our cordial acceptance by the gracious and glorious utility of its end.

IV. This same doctrine is directly related to the redemption of sinners by the process of an ATONING DEATH. The life of Christ

ended amid the agonies of crucifixion. The evangelists having sketched his public career, at length bring him to this strange and solemn hour. They hesitate not to tell the story of his death. Their narrative becomes unusually minute, when the wonderful Man, deserted by man, apparently forsaken by God, is himself overwhelmed in death. Reasoning from the greatness and goodness of Christ, from the miracles which he had performed, and also his claims upon human gratitude, we should have anticipated no such sequel. It seems a singular epilogue in a life so illustrious, an almost incredible reversal of its previous glory, a deep shadow alike terrible and mysterious. We should rather have supposed, that Heaven would have furnished a celestial chariot, with which to bear such a Being to the skies. Yet there the fact stands on the page of Bible history, that Jesus of Nazareth was nailed to the cross of Calvary, and there hung, in the experience of untold anguish, till all that was spiritual in his nature fled from his lacerated body, leaving it broken, motionless, lifeless in death. Yes, there the fact stands without any effort to conceal it. The narrative is clear and distinct. There is a manifest design to make the fact prominent.

Moreover, to this fate Jesus himself made no resistance, and from it sought no escape. He met it of his own choice, fully foreseeing it, and having ample power to avoid the whole tragedy. He need not have died on the cross, yea, he need not have died at all by human hands, if he had otherwise determined. He was not a victim by coercion. Personally he did not deserve such a doom; God surely was not offended with him; and against his own consent, earth could not harm him. He laid down his own life, having power to lay it down, and power to take it again. No man took it from him. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Why, for what purpose, in what relation, did Jesus thus die? You are familiar with the Bible answer to this question. You remember that Christ told his disciples that he came to seek and to save that which was lost, yea, to give his life a ransom for many. You remember, too, what he said on the night which preceded the day of his death, instituting the Lord's Supper, and expounding its symbolic character—of the bread, saying, "This is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me"—of the wine, saying: "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." These are plain words, clear words, true words, teaching that doctrine on which saintship has in all ages based the hope of salvation. Jesus spake them, meaning what he said, knowing in what character and for what purposes he was about to die, and designing to make his own idea both prominent and immortal in the memory of man. We must



believe them, regarding him the teacher as also our atoning Saviour. This was his thought, and hence, it should be ours.

The entire tenor of the Scriptures is in harmony with these memorable utterances. The paschal lamb had for ages typified the coming and the work of "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world." The sacrificial system which God gave to the Jews, and commanded them to observe, was Heaven's chosen shadow of good things to come. The prophets, and especially Isaiah, were distinct and positive in declaring that the Messiah, of whom they wrote, would by suffering and death make an atonement for the sins of men. The first preachers of Christ proclaimed the doctrine of his death as an atonement for sin—as the procuring medium of pardon and reconciliation with God. This was their view, their doctrine, their hope for themselves and the world. Say what you please about the why and the wherefore, or say nothing; yet here stands the fact, which, as a fact of revelation, is as clear as the light of noonday—the oft-repeated fact, that Jesus died for our sins, that he tasted death for every man, that he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, the just suffering for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God—I say, the fact, that Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us. There is no getting rid of it, if we read the Scriptures with candor. Nor have I ever been able to see for what good reason men should wish to avoid either the sight or the belief of this fact. It contemplates just what we need; it is a service wholly in our behalf; and if asserted in an accredited revelation, one would think it the very last thing that humanity would seek to ignore or shun. Why this desire of some men to detach the doctrine of the atonement from the Gospel? Why this antagonism of thought to the only theory of pardon which the Scriptures contain? Why this persistent effort to blot the principle of grace from the government of God? If we bow to the authority of the Bible at all, we should most cheerfully accept its whole testimony on the vital question of a sinner's salvation. To select the atonement as the special object of fastidious and skeptical criticism, is alike stupid and ungrateful.

Observe, now, that this doctrine of atonement by the sufferings and death of Jesus, crowns and completes our view of the Divine Incarnation. The complex and wonderful Person thus produced, was to be a Saviour, a Redeemer of guilty beings, meeting by a transaction peculiarly his own, an emergency in the history of man, suspending penalty, and yet honoring the law which enforces it. Though he was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God; still, in the relation of a Saviour to our race, it was meet in the wisdom of Heaven that he should take his position under the law; that he should assume the form of a servant; that he should be made in the likeness of men; and that in

this condition he should humble himself and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Just this composition of attributes in the Person, and just these items and conditions in the history of an efficacious atonement, were the requisites fixed upon in the counsels of eternity, and actually consummated in the life of Christ. We do well here to accept the truth as we find it in the Bible, whether our philosophy can or can not discern the mutual relation of all its particulars. We may not be able to adjust the elements of this supernatural plan to each other, as they exist in the mind of God. We are not the judges in the case. The requirements of the problem lie beyond the reach of natural reason. We do not know beforehand the necessary antecedents of a sinner's salvation; and hence it will be our wisdom to accept the truth as the Bible states it, rejoicing in the facts declared, even if the method of their relation should entirely transcend the most penetrating search of our philosophy.

Thus seeing the truth, we look upon Jesus the *Man* as the consecrated tent, the created organism of the world's Redeemer, the human visibility and locality, the victim and the altar of an oblation whose property is to cancel guilt and save the soul. Our thoughts rest upon a tangible object, and our faith, upon an appreciable method. His humanity and divinity are both involved, each being necessary to the other, and both uniting in the great work to be done. Jesus dead, is therefore a conqueror reposing in his glory, most victorious when apparently most blasted. He has finished his work. Those who sought and buried his body, knew little of the marvel so near to their eyes. Earth before had never received such a trust. Human hands never before carried such a corse to the tomb. The sad elegy of friendship was never before chanted over such a celestial presence. No wonder that angels watched while all that was mortal in the Prince of Peace lay sleeping in the sepulcher. Wait a moment! A glorious sequel is at hand! The resurrection morn has dawned! Jesus slain has left the tomb; at intervals for forty days he has met his disciples, and identified his person to their knowledge; he has given them their commission; and now you behold this same Jesus who bowed his head in death, mounting the heavens, greeted by the hosts of the world above, and taking his position as the Lord of heaven and earth to the glory of God the Father. He is now highly exalted; his name is above every name; and at his name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth. See then for what purpose Christ came in the likeness of men, for what purpose he humbled himself, and in what relation he was put to death in the flesh; let the Bible be your guide upon these points; and you will never want a theme for gratitude, or a spectacle for devout wonder. This glorious Person, this Word made flesh, into whose marvelous movements the angels desired to look, of whom the

prophets sang, to whom the apostles bore witness, and for whom martyrs have bled—this Lord Jesus Christ who hath ascended up far above all heavens, and who will come again to awake the dead, and judge mankind—this wonderful Counselor, who in his humanity sweat great drops of blood, who stood at Pilate's bar, who wore a crown of thorns, who breathed out an earthly life upon the cross in extremest agony—this great High Priest of our profession who made the atonement, for the joy that was set before him, despising the shame and apparent ignominy of the mortal struggle—this august Mediator between God and man, this heavenly Intercessor and final Judge—yes, this is the Being whom we preach as the Saviour of the world, of whose life we make mention, and to whom we point the thoughts of guilty men as their only ground of hope.

The doctrine of God in Christ, implying as its foundation a Divine Incarnation in the person of this Christ, was, and is, and ever will be, a complete pertinency to human want. The ends sought thereby, are those in which humanity has the very highest interest. The doctrine is not a speculation to bewilder thought, but a divine reality, a stupendous miracle of grace, for the salvation of our souls. Looking here, faith deals with the most exciting things that faith ever believed. Trusting here, faith finds a comfort pure as heaven and stronger than death. If the doctrine be true, and the four particulars we have named, express its relation to our instruction and salvation, then judge ye as to what ought to be the conduct of that man, or that community of men, or that world of men, to whom the knowledge of this truth is given. To be indifferent in its presence, negligent of its appeal, and disobedient to its mandate, supposes a torpor of thought paralleled only by the depravity which it implies and the doom it deserves. Come then, ye sons of earth, ye fallen children of Adam, ye men of all climes and ranks, come to your Redeemer-God. Taught by his wisdom, and pardoned by his grace, come and live forever.

## S E R M O N    I X .

## THE GREAT WORK-DAY OF LIFE.

"I MUST work the works of him that sent me, while it is day : the night cometh, when no man can work."—JOHN 9 : 4.

OUR text primarily relates to Christ. But it may be considered, by way of accommodation, as referring to ourselves. This is the important and interesting light in which we are next to view it.

1. We have, each of us, a work to perform : we are, while here, to secure the salvation of our never-dying souls. This is the prime object ; the grand end for which we are sent into this world.

At our birth, "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world"—lying in moral ruins—depraved in our dispositions—fastening our affections upon forbidden objects—impure in the motives that reign within us, and disobedient in our external conduct ; this being our melancholy, our guilty state, God requires of us a radical change in our character, our dispositions, our motives, and our external conduct. "Except a man be born again," it is written, "he can not see the kingdom of God," and without holiness "no man shall see the Lord."

Qualified, however, in our faculties, to know and serve God ; with the volume of inspiration before us ; surrounded, on every side, by an abundance of such works as clearly declare the character of their author ; warned by the afflictions, and encouraged by the blessings of his providence ; he justly commands us to love him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." He is to have our supreme regard. Our own selves—earthly objects—nay, all things else—are to dwindle into their proper insignificance ; while our affections are to be permanently fixed upon him who is worthy of our love.

Again ; because of our obligations to this best of beings, and because of our numberless transgressions, repentance for these transgressions is, with reason, made a prominent part of our great work : "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." This repentance, to be acceptable, must not be merely remorse, arising from the discovery of the fact that we are exposed to punishment. Its grand characteristic is not to be a servile fear—a dread of future torment. This is that "sorrow of the world" that "worketh death." A man may possess it to the highest degree, and yet be one of those upon whose devoted head the wrath of the Almighty shall fall. But "godly sorrow"—evangelical re-

pentance—has its origin in a deep conviction of the abused goodness and the despised excellence of the Lord our God. It is the heart-rending lamentation of a child that has transgressed against a Father, whom he tenderly loves and greatly reveres. Self-accusation is now his business. The ingratitude, the folly and guilt and hatefulness of his transgressions, fill his soul with anguish. The deeper this conviction—the greater this self-abasement—usually the better the future conduct, and the more abundant the fruits “meet for repentance.”

But repentance is not our only duty; we are not left to mourn for our sins without hope of pardon. Blessed be God, a way of access to his favor is opened; a ransom is provided; our Redeemer's blood is shed: “He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.” This faith is not the province of the intellect alone. It is not barely the assent of the understanding to the truth of an historical fact. It does not consist, wholly, in the cold, mental acknowledgment that Jesus is the Saviour of sinners—an acknowledgment that may be reiterated thousands of times in succession, without having a particle of influence upon the conduct. The faith which the Gospel recognizes, also involves the exercise of the affections. “With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness.” This faith is not a dead and an inoperative, but a living and productive faith. It is characterized as the faith that “worketh,” and that “by love” to the Lord Jesus. Deeply sensible of his excellence, the subject of this faith fixes his affections upon him as “the chiefest among ten thousand,” and as “one altogether lovely.” Upon his merits the sinner builds, as the only sure foundation of his acceptance with God. In proportion as his love to Christ increases, the higher will be his estimate of his Saviour's character; the greater his confidence in the promises of the “anointed” of God, the more marked and extensive will be their influence upon his life and conversation.

These are some of the essential particulars in the work which we are, each of us, sent into this world to accomplish.

2. We are to work “while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work.” This life is the appropriate time—the only season given for the performance of our great work. This is our day of trial, our period of probation. Our existence here is only preparatory to our existence hereafter. It is but the infancy of our being. This world was designed to be only the nursery of heaven, that men might here be trained up to be inhabitants of everlasting mansions of bliss. Our conduct here determines our destiny forever. “There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom” concerning our salvation, “in the grave, whither” we are all hastening. As death leaves us, so the judgment will find us; and as our characters then are, such will they continue



to be through eternity. This life is the only space for repentance, the only time for making our peace with God. When the messenger of death arrives, if that great object is not effected, well may we take up the prophet's lamentation: "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." From the gloomy mansions of despair, with what emotions shall we then look back upon days of negligence, idleness and trifling; of folly, of sin, and of forgetfulness of God! Could we only retrace our steps, how eagerly, how quickly would we set about that great work, the salvation of the soul. But it will then be too late. The die will be cast, the books will be closed forever.

"Great God! on what a slender thread  
Hang everlasting things!  
Th' eternal state of all the dead  
Upon life's feeble strings."

We must, therefore, work "while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

A few remarks in application of the subject, and I have done.

Suppose, my friends, that any of you, by accomplishing some task, however difficult, could secure to yourself, perfect and uninterrupted happiness for fifty years: how speedily would you set about it; what exertions would you make; what labor would you undergo; what privations would you endure; what difficulties would you encounter, to attain this happiness. But in the word of God, we are offered happiness, unalloyed, through eternity, the thousands of thousands of ages of eternity, if we will only repent, and place our trust in the Saviour of sinners. "Repent ye, and believe the gospel." These are the terms upon which eternal life is offered to every child of Adam. But have we all complied with these terms? Have we all repented, and placed our trust in the Lord Jesus?

Ye aged fathers, who have not, as yet, begun the great work; when do you intend to enter upon it? Behold, the vigor of youth, and the strength of manhood are gone! Stooping beneath the heavy hand of time, your heads whitened by age, with one foot already in the grave; have you so long lived in vain? Is the great business of your life yet untouched? Have you yet to make your peace with God? Think of the multitudes that have fallen on your right hand and on your left. You have, perhaps, followed to the grave, the friend of your youth—the partner of your joys and sorrows—one now resting in heaven. But did you then part forever? Was that an eternal farewell? Does not your heart say: Oh! that this separation may be but for a season? Oh! that we may meet again. Work, then, "while it is day," for "the night cometh," and see to it, that it be not to you the never-ending, starless night of desolation. Those who are younger, expect

from you the counsel of age, and the wisdom of experience. But how can you direct them in the path in which you have never trodden? Can you say to others, "This is the way;" while you yourself refuse to walk therein? How many, unsanctified, have gone to give up their last account, who looked to you for an example, and whose souls were, in a measure, committed to your care? Their destiny is fixed. Yes! Their destiny is fixed forever; but you are left, a solitary leafless tree, upon a barren waste. Has not your long experience taught you that all things here are vanity, and that without religion, there is no substantial, enduring happiness? Think of the guilt you have from year to year been heaping upon yourself; the privileges you have already abused; the Sabbaths you have misspent; the judgments of God's providence you have disregarded; and then ask—candidly ask—what hope there is that you will now turn to God. The longer this work is delayed, the greater the danger that it will never be begun. Perhaps the sentence has already gone forth: "This year thou shalt die." But you are in the hands of a merciful God. "Seek ye him," then, "while he may be found; call ye upon him, while he is near."

You, who are in the prime of life, toiling for wealth and fame, and immersed in worldly pursuits! Let me entreat you to turn aside, and see whether there is not a more substantial good than that which you have hitherto sought! Is not "the pearl of great price," by you yet to be found? Should a neighbor of yours, perfectly able to provide for his household, and to furnish them with an ample subsistence; should such an one neglect all the means in his hands of so doing, and spend his time in idleness, leaving his family to want and misery, you would justly condemn him; the word of God condemns him, and declares him to be worse than a heathen. But how much more guilty is the man who makes no efforts to provide for the souls of his household? Is not this the case with you? Do not those of your family who are now present bear witness to your guilt, and say within themselves, "Thou art the man"? You are a father. Can not your children testify that it is evidently no part of your concern to qualify them for heaven—that whatever may be your regard for their bodies—for their worldly prosperity, you entirely neglect the welfare of their souls? Did the morning or evening incense ever rise from your family altar? Did they ever hear you—I put it to your conscience—did they ever hear you offer a single petition for yourself, or for them? Nay! did you ever, in their presence, ask the blessing of God, even upon the common bounties of his providence? You are a mother. Have you ever taught your little ones to breathe the infant prayer to their "Father in heaven"? Have you received them as gifts from him, and considered them as only intrusted to your care, that you might train them up for future blessedness? Parents! To you

your children direct their eyes for an example, and will naturally tread in your footsteps. God only knows how many of you may in this way be taking your offspring by the hand and leading them in the road to perdition. Take heed lest the blood of their souls be found upon your garments. Unless the Most High turns them by his almighty power, they will continue in this unhappy course. Perhaps you ease your consciences by alleging present "want of time" in apology for this neglect of their true welfare, as well as your own; but hereafter you "hope to have more leisure!" What period then have you fixed upon for beginning the great work of saving the soul? Have you determined to neglect it entirely, until all your worldly wishes are gratified, and until age has robbed you of your relish for earthly enjoyments? Must the great—the grand business of life always yield to toys and trifles? Beware how you slight your God. Beware how you sport upon the brink of the precipice. "In the midst of life we are in death." "Therefore, be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not, the son of man cometh."

My youthful friends! Are there not some of you who have not yet commenced the important work of your salvation? Have not many of your companions taken up the cross and followed their Master, and did you refuse to go and "do likewise"? They are spending their strength for God; while you are wasting the precious morning of life in folly and in sin. How eagerly do you pursue the fleeting pleasures of the world. How anxiously do you inquire: "Who will show us any earthly good?" And yet how unconcerned—how indifferent to your everlasting well-being! "My son! give me thine heart." "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth"—these are the mandates of the Almighty; and dare you disobey? If you do not now consecrate yourself to God, is there not reason to fear that you never will? The greater part of those that ever enlist under the banners of the cross, do it while young; before the soul is chained down to sin by the over-whelming and almost irresistible power of habit; before the sensibilities of our nature are blunted, and the heart hardened by familiarity with the world. There is, then, no safety in delay. God has made no promise for the future. His language universally is: "Behold! now is the accepted time; behold! now is the day of salvation." "To-day if ye will hear his voice; harden not your heart." How can you thus neglect the dying love of our Divine Redeemer! Generously sympathizing in all other distresses—feeling for the afflictions of your fellow-men—how can you be thus insensible to the sufferings endured that you might live forever? Let me entreat you all to remember these sufferings and this love; to embrace this Saviour; to apply your hearts to wisdom; to begin quickly the work of your salvation. Let there be no delay. "Escape for thy life—escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed!"